

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01 SAJ-01 EB-07 /095 W

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R 051315Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 868

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY ALGIER

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

USMISSION

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 3436

E.O. 11652 XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, UR, MO, AG

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH MOROCCAN AMBASSADOR TO USSR
CONCERNING SAHARA

1. SUMMARY: MOROCCAN AMBASSADOR IS CONVINCED THAT SOVIETS DO NOT WISH CONFLICT BETWEEN ALGERIA AND MOROCCO OVER SAHARA AND HE BELIEVES THEY HAVE USED THEIR INFLUENCE TO DATE TO RESTRAIN BOUMEDIENNE. HE FEARS ALGERIANS HAVE GOTTEN THEMSELVES OUT ON LIMB AND WILL HAVE TO FIND WAY TO WITHDRAW IN FACE OF "REALITIES". ACCORDING TO AMBASSADOR, KOSYGIN TOLD MOROCCAN PRIME MINISTER THAT IT WAS NECESSARY TO FIND SOLUTION WHICH WOULD PRESERVE PRESTIGE AND DIGNITY OF BOTH BOUMEDIENNE AND HASSAN. AMBASSADOR SAID THAT SOVIET-MOROCCAN ACCORD ON PHOSPHATES WAS NOT REPEAT NOT DISCUSSED DURING OSMAN'S RECENT VISIT IN MOSCOW, ALTHOUGH
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PROJECT FOR SUCH ACCORD REMAINS OPEN. END SUMMARY.

2. I CALLED ON MOROCCAN AMBASSADOR TO SOVIET UNION MOHAMED SIJILMASSI MARCH 4 TO DISCUSS DEVELOPMENTS REGARDING SAHARA AND SOVIET ATTITUDES CONCERNING SITUATION. AMBASSADOR SAID HE IS CONVINCED FROM WHAT HE HAS HEARD DIRECTLY FROM SOVIETS AND FROM WHAT HAS BEEN REPORTED TO HIM BY OTHER SOURCES THAT SOVIET UNION DOES NOT WISH TO SEE MILITARY CONFLICT DEVELOP BETWEEN ALGERIA AND MOROCCO OVER THE SAHARA. HE UNDERSTANDS THAT SOVIETS HAVE COUNSELED BOUMEDINNE AGAINST ANY MOVES TOWARD WAR AND THAT, WHEN BOUMEDIEENE VISITED MOSCOW IN DECEMBER ON SECRET MISSION, SOVIETS TOLD HIM THAT IF HE MADE WAR HE WOULD BE ACTING ON HIS OWN AND COULD NOT EXPECT SOVIET SUPPORT. (COMMENT: IT IS OF INTEREST THAT AMBASSADOR ACCEPTS BOUMEDINNE VISIT AS FACT.)

3. ACCORDING TO AMBASSADOR, WHEN PRIME MINISTER OSMAN MADE BRIEF STOP-OVER IN MOSCOW LAST MONTH, KOSYGIN SEEMED MODERATE AND EVEN-HANDED IN DISCUSSING SAHARA PROBLEM. KOSYGIN HAD STATED THAT IT WAS NECESSARY TO FIND A SOLUTION WHICH PRESERVES THE PRESTIGE AND DIGNITY OF BOTH CHIEFS OF STATE, BOUMEDINNE AND HASSAN. KOSYGIN APPEARED TO BE CONCERNED THAT BOUMEDIENNE HAD GOTTEN HIMSELF OUT ON LIMB WITH REGARD TO INTERVENTION IN SAHARA, AND THAT A WAY NEEDED TO BE FOUND TO EXTRICATE HIMSELF WITHOUT EMBARRASSMENT FROM THE SITUATION.

4. THE AMBASSADOR REMARKED THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE TOLD MOROCCANS THAT THEY HAVE COUNSELED THE ALGERIANS AGAINST MAKING WAR AND HE KNOWS THAT, IN ALGIERS, THE SOVIETS ARE SAYING THAT THEY ARE EXERCISING RESTRAINING INFLUENCE ON MOROCCANS. HE FEELS THESE REPORTS ARE TRUE AND REFLECT SOVIET DESIRE TO AVOID CONFLICT.

5. AMBASSADOR SAID THAT AT ONE POINT LAST FALL THE SOVIETS SEEMED READY TO PLAY A MEDIATION ROLE CONCERNING THE SAHARA. THEY APPARENTLY HAD IN MIND UNDERTAKING SUCH A MISSION TOGETHER WITH AN ARAB OR AN AFRICAN STATE (AMBASSADOR UNDERTOOD THAT KUWAIT, IRAQ AND SENEGAL AND BEEN CONSIDERED AS POSSIBLE CANDIDATES FOR SUCH ROLE). HOWEVER, SOVIETS HAD CONCLUDED THAT AN APPROPRIATE FRAMEWORK HAD BEEN LACKING FOR SUCH A MEDIATION EFFORT AND HAD DECIDED AGAINST IT. THE AMBASSADOR NOW DOUBTS THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD BE INCLINED TO FAVOR INVOLVEMENT IN MEDIATION.

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6. WITH REGARD TO ALGERIAN MOTIVATIONS, THE AMBASSADOR COMMENTED THAT SIX MONTHS AGO BOUMEDIENNE WAS OF THE OPINION THAT MOROCCO WOULD NOT BE IN A POSITION TO TAKE HOLD IN THE SAHARA EFFECTIVELY AND THAT IT WOULD BE A RELATIVELY EASY MATTER FOR ALGERIA TO ANNEX THE TERRITORY THROUGH POLITICAL PRESSURES VIA THE POLISARIO. THIS HAD BEEN A MISCALCULATION, HOWEVER, AND BOUMEDIENNE MUST NOW SEE THAT THE REALITIES OF THE SITUATION ARE OTHERWISE AND THAT IT WILL NOT BE FEASIBLE FOR ALGERIA TO FOLLOW SUCH A COURSE.

7. THE AMBASSADOR SEEMED TO HAVE NO VERY CLEAR IDEA AS TO WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS, ALTHOUGH HE SEEMED CONFIDENT (1) THAT THE MOROCCAN POSITION IS BOTH LEGITIMATE AND STRONG; (2) THAT THE ALGERIAN POSITION IS UNREALISTIC AND THAT THE ALGERIANS WILL HAVE TO FIND A WAY TO RECONCILE THEMSELVES TO THE SITUATION; AND (3) THE SOVIETS DO NOT WISH A CONFLICT BETWEEN ALGERIA AND MOROCCO AND WILL USE THEIR INFLUENCE TO RESTRAIN BOUMEDIENNE. THE AMBASSADOR ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE FORMATION OF THE "SAHARAN ARAB DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC" IS A COMPLICATING FACTOR IN THE AFFAIR, BUT HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT THIS ENTITY WOULD NOT RECEIVE RECOGNITION BY A MAJORITY OF OAU STATES AND WOULD BE REVEALED AS AN EMPTY FRONT FOR ALGERIAN AMBITIONS.

8. THROUGHOUT OUR CONVERSATION, THE AMBASSADOR WAS VERY CRITICAL OF ALGERIA AND CLAIMED THAT THE ALGERIAN LEADERSHIP NOURISHES IDEAS OF EXERCISING HEGEMONY OVER ALL OF NORTH AFRICA. HE THOUGHT THAT ONE USEFUL ASPECT OF THE SAHARAN PROBLEM IS THAT IT HAS SERVED TO REVEAL ALGERIA'S DESIGNS FOR ALL TO SEE.

9. WITH REGARD TO THE VISIT OF MOROCCAN PRIME MINISTER OSMAN TO MOSCOW, THE AMBASSADOR SAID THE MOROCCANS HAD BEEN PLEASED AT THE ATTENTION KOSYGIN HAD GIVEN TO OSMAN DESPITE KOSYGIN'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE SOVIET PARTY CONGRESS. THE AMBASSADOR CONFIRMED THAT NO DISCUSSION HAD TAKEN PLACE REGARDING THE PROJECT FOR A JOINT SOVIET-MOROCCAN AGREEMENT FOR PHOSPHATE EXPLOITATION IN MOROCCO. HE SAID THAT THERE HAVE BEEN EXTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS OF THIS MATTER IN THE PAST BUT THAT HE HAD THE IMPRESSION IN RECENT MONTHS THAT THERE HAVE BEEN SOME DELAYS ON THE MOROCCAN SIDE, PERHAPS ENGENDERED BY CONSIDERATIONS INVOLVING THE EEC. IN ANY EVENT, HE SAID THE IDEA OF A JOINT SOVIET-MOROCCAN ACCORD WAS STILL OPEN AND HAD NOT BEEN DISAVOWED BY EITHER SIDE. HE DID NOT KNOW, HOWEVER, WHEN IT MIGHT BE TAKEN UP AGAIN ON AN ACTIVE BASIS.

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